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AUTHOR Bloom, Thomas A.
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ABSTRACT

The use of advisory committees for the development, maintenance, and continued exchange of information for hospitality education programs is discussed. Two types of committees are the general advisory type, which can deal with entire programs on institutional and community levels, and the single-field type, which helps develop programs in specific areas. The advantages of advisory committees are: (1) they provide a unique opportunity to gather occupational and industrial information that can augment programs; (2) their organization and function can be tailored to specific situations and needs; and (3) they can function effectively without assuming either legislative or administrative responsibility. Hospitality education advisory committee members show the greatest continued interest and participation in school projects when their advice is sought frequently, their suggestions are adopted, democratic procedures are followed in meetings, they receive public credit for their contributions, they are invited to attend department meetings and campus functions, and when school representatives keep them informed of the progress that results from their work. Factors to be considered in choosing advisory committee members are experience, adequate time available, character, community representation, and length of committee service. Committee activities and suggestions for dealing with members are listed. (ME)

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THE HOSPITALITY EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

BY

THOMAS A. BLOOM

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA-CROOKSTON

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THE HOSPITALITY EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Introduction

Hospitality education should not be insulated; rather it should be both a reflection and a shaper of the needs of society, and particularly of the surrounding community. If hospitality education programs are to serve these functions, though, they must encourage an exchange of information, ideas, and philosophies within their communities. A Hospitality Education Advisory Committee can provide the mechanism for just this sort of exchange.

Such a committee, invited to assist in the development and maintenance of a hospitality education program, acts consultatively, undertaking to make suggestions and recommendations to the faculty and administrators. These administrators of course retain their prerogative to shape curricula and course content.

Two distinct types of advisory committees can be utilized to effect this informational exchange;

1. General Advisory Committees can help develop, maintain, and coordinate entire hospitality education programs for local vocational schools or two-and four-year colleges. These committees might (a) pinpoint those educational and

training needs that ensure realistic and practical programs; (b) provide a community understanding of hospitality education; and thus (c) build local respect and support for the work of hospitality education.

2. Single-Field Committees might help develop the programs in such specific areas as hotel management, restaurant management, institution management, tourism, housekeeping or dietetics.

The Advisory Capacity

Educational professionals often bridle at the thought of a "citizens' committee" usurping administrative or educational powers. But there is no reason why the two types of committees discussed above should go beyond their assigned functions. If the agenda of the first committee meeting provides for a clear explanation that the committee exists only to advise and that the academic staff retains full control over the program, there can be no misunderstanding.

In turn, every member--including the faculty--must understand the committee's function. A hospitality education advisory committee can move in a variety of directions. The area of the program's specialization, the number of years the program has existed, its size, and the needs of its community will all affect the functions of hospitality education advisory committees. But to repeat, an advisory

committee acts only in a consulting capacity; it makes recommendations and suggestions; and educational officials are encouraged, but not required, to act on this advice.

Committee Activities

The general function of a hospitality education advisory committee is to promote closer cooperation and better understanding among the industry, the general public, and the hospitality programs. Even though a committee has no official status, its consultative function can be essential to the success of a local program. More specifically, an advisory committee may aid a program in the following 22 ways. It can

(1) advise on special training needs for specific hospitality occupations;

(2) help develop instructional content;

(3) advise on those changes and trends in the hospitality industry that affect training and employment;

(4) help evaluate an overall hospitality education program;

(5) help determine the type and quality of facilities and equipment the hospitality program requires;

(6) visit the campus early in the year to welcome and encourage hospitality students;

(7) initiate a speakers' bureau to provide guest experts on topics specified by the faculty;

(8) help find jobs for hospitality graduates and "interns";

(9) arrange for student loans or gifts of instructional equipment, books, and materials;

(10) arrange for appropriate field trips;

(11) present panel discussions to students and civic groups;

(12) suggest news and feature stories to local newspapers and help in their preparation;

(13) arrange to publicize the hospitality program in the meetings and bulletins of civic groups, Chambers of Commerce, and other groups;

(14) help select recipients of various awards and scholarships;

(15) participate in special hospitality career opportunity programs;

(16) help delineate the aptitudes, attitudes, education, and experience applicants need for work in the hospitality industry;

(17) help locate industry resource people to augment the work of the local instructors;

(18) conduct in-service programs for the faculty members;

(19) help influence local, state, and federal legislation in ways favorable to hospitality education;

(20) help develop in-house philosophy and educational objectives for the program;

(21) help identify research needed in hospitality education and in the industry; and

(22) help "articulate" the local hospitality program with those of other schools, colleges, and universities.

Establishing a Hospitality Education Advisory Committee

The initial hospitality education advisory committee organizational problems usually center on time and people. An educator may find that potential committee members simply do not have the time for educational service of this kind. Other potential members may demur, assuming that their ideas will receive only token consideration. But hospitality education advisory committees should not be composed of people representing only one set of ideas or opinions however closely these ideas reflect those of the program. If a diversity of opinion appears in a committee, so much the better. A smooth working, functional advisory committee should, after all, represent numerous ideas and welcome people with the time and commitment to serve. I have compiled a list of five specific criteria I believe to be essential for hospitality education advisory committee membership:

1. Experience. Committee members ought to have successful first-hand experience in the specialized areas they address, and they should be eager to share this experience.

2. Adequate time. Since an advisory committee may have to meet frequently, its members must be willing to maintain close contact with the school activities and to devote some time to committee work, some of which will inevitably take place on the school or college grounds.

3. Character. Members should be invited to serve on the recommendation of their colleagues. Implicit in this recommendation should be a strong sense of responsibility, civic-mindedness, and a cooperative nature. The most agressive and ambitious person does not always make the best committee member, nor does a narrow-minded person with a fixed idea.

4. Community representation. Committee membership should be broadly representative of the area's hospitality operations and the positions within those operations. Both men and women should serve on the committee. Ideally, too, the membership would include employees, recent graduates, members of civic and professional clubs, members of organized labor, and media representatives.

5. Length of service. Members may be invited to serve three-year terms, and the memberships should be staggered so that experienced members always remain on the committee.

Appointment of Committee Members

The program representative who works most closely with an advisory committee should have the authority either to select or to recommend committee members, but the formal invitation to

serve should come from the principal, president, dean, or program chairman. A letter or call from one of these officials lends an air of importance to the invitation. Remember, too, that program representatives set the tone for an advisory committee. They are responsible for utilizing to the fullest extent possible the knowledge and expertise of the industry representatives who comprise the committee.

Dealing on Personal Terms with an Advisory Committee

The following list of eleven suggestions should help a program representative deal efficiently and fruitfully with the members of a hospitality education advisory committee:

1. To begin with, the school administration and faculty must make a firm commitment to the concept of an advisory committee. Moreover, the committee's goals should be set in advance, and these goals should be reiterated and developed periodically.

2. Potential members should be invited officially (preferably, as we said, from the highest ranking school or college administrator) to serve on the committee.

3. Committee members should be instructed in the functions and objectives of the hospitality education program. Some advisory committees are handicapped by not knowing what the educational program involves. They are, therefore, unable to explain the program to the public or to appreciate

the methods the program uses to achieve its objectives. To combat this problem, program representatives should spend a major portion of the first meeting explaining these principles and introducing the members to the program's activities. Every new member will have to be oriented in a similar, laborious way, but the time spent will be repaid by the informed enthusiasm of the members. Committee members should be made to realize that the program can win respect only with their cooperation. Thus periodic reports of committee progress tend to develop a sense of achievement and pride.

4. Invite committee members to school events like department meetings, graduation exercises, and social gatherings. Also, noon luncheon meetings on school or campus grounds bring an advisory committee nearer to the real academic life. The informal lunch leads to cooperative effort; it also provides a good opportunity for introducing staff members and students.

5. Seek the advice of committee members. Advisory committee members will continue their interest in department projects only as long as their advice is sought about problems they can help with. A committee will continue to augment the work of the department only if its suggestions have been adopted and only if democratic procedures are used in committee meetings.

6. Remember that committee members are likely to be

busy people whose time is valuable. They should not be asked to do menial jobs or, at the other extreme, to approach problems that require a good deal of time, independent research, or specialized expertise.

7. The program representative should prepare an agenda for each meeting. Moreover, he should be familiar with every issue before the committee, and he should be able to provide members with all the information necessary for a comprehensive discussion. Common courtesies and business procedures should, of course, be observed. Ample notice should be given of each meeting. The agenda should be sent out with the meeting notice. And minutes of each meeting should be forwarded to all members as soon as possible after the meeting.

8. Generous credit for help should always reach the committee members. Their names should appear in program publications, catalogs, brochures, and press releases. They should be informed as soon as their advice has been implemented. Furthermore, the program representative should forward reports on the effectiveness of their changes and additions. When their proposals are not adopted, committee members should be told why.

9. The program representative on an advisory committee opens himself, in a sense, to public appraisal. A hospitality education advisory committee can obviously generate criticism as well as advice. Thus, when committee suggestions are sound,

they should be adopted whenever possible. If the program does not really intend to take the committee into its confidence and act upon its advice, it should not go through the motions. Moreover, the representative should learn to recognize constructive criticism and accept it gracefully. It is extremely important for a representative to have an honest, appreciative attitude toward his committee. Educators may be inclined to patronize laymen and underestimate their wisdom in educational matters. These attitudes discourage the confidence and cooperation of advisory committee members.

10. The program representative must show his committee that his interest lies in serving the community rather than in simply gaining publicity for his program. The committee members will cooperate enthusiastically if they believe that the program is really trying to improve hospitality instruction and, therefore, the industry.

11. Meetings may be called at regular intervals or at times w'en a need arises. Active and involved committees tend to meet oftener than those that serve pro forma. Keep in contact with committee members between meetings to ensure that they understand what is happening in the program.

Conclusion

Three main points about hospitality education advisory committees that deserve re-emphasis follow here:

1. They provide a unique opportunity to gather occupa-

tional and industry information that can constructively augment hospitality education programs.

2. Their organization and function can be tailored to specific situations and needs.

3. They can function effectively without assuming either legislative or administrative responsibility.

An advisory committee does not automatically guarantee a successful hospitality program, nor are these committees without their problems and conflicts. But a hospitality program that recognizes the contributions a lay group can make will draw as freely as it can upon the experiences of these laymen.

Hospitality education advisory committee members will, in turn, show the greatest continued interest and participation in school projects when (a) their advice is sought frequently; (b) their suggestions are often adopted; (c) democratic procedures are followed in committee meetings; (d) they receive public credit for their contributions; (e) they are invited to attend departmental meetings and school and campus functions; and (f) school representatives keep them informed of the progress that results from their work.

In general, when advisory committees convene, both the program and the community benefit from the exchange between educators and professionals. A program that neglects this exchange denies its students the maximum measure of assistance

that could and should be available to them--assistance that is the natural product of interaction between those who education and train students and those who ultimately hire them.

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